

Minutes
Historic Courthouse, Board Chambers, 3rd Floor
225 North Board Street
June 23, 2020

The Thomas County Board of Commissioners met on the above date in a regular scheduled meeting at 6:00 p.m. at the Historic Courthouse, Commission Chambers, with the following board members present:

Phillip V. Brown, Chairman, Dist. 7

Rev. Jeremy G. Rich, Dist. 1
Kenneth E. Hickey, District 3
Donnie L. Baggett, Dist. 5

Wiley E. Grady, Vice-Chair, Dist. 6

Moses Gross, Dist. 2
Mark NeSmith, Dist. 4 (absent)
Zippy T. Vonier, Dist. 8

Staff present was County Manager Michael J. Stephenson, County Attorney Bruce Warren, Planning Director Ken Gay, Zoning Administrator Donna Holbert, and County Clerk Celeste Tyler.

News/Media present: Chris Hurst, WPAX radio

Chairman Brown called the meeting to order, and Commissioner Rich gave the invocation.

Chairman Brown recognized Commissioner Grady who made a motion to approve the minutes of the June 9, 2020 Board Meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Baggett. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman Brown and Commissioners Baggett, Grady, Gross, Hickey, Rich, and Vonier voting aye.

Chairman Brown declared a Public Hearing in regards to Application 20-4-1, applicant Verizon Wireless of the East LP, Brian Devine, agent for property owners Rita Lucas and Sonia Minors from AG to AG Conditional Use for the installation of a mono pole telecommunications tower 164 feet in height on Smith Road (Map 74, Parcel 48).

Chairman Brown recognized Planning Director Ken Gay who presented Application 20-4-1 for its 2nd Public Hearing and recommended to the Board approval of the Agriculture land use classification to Agriculture Conditional Use for the purpose of installing a cell tower at Smith Road.

Chairman Brown recognized Andy Rotenstreich, of 420 20th St. N. Suite 1400 Birmingham, Alabama, a representative for Verizon Wireless who stated that the proposed tower would improve coverage for Thomas County residents thereby improving access to emergency services. He explained their process of first looking for an existing tower to expand the coverage and if finding none suitable would build an additional tower. He asked for approval of the application based on meeting the 9 zoning criteria for conditional use as stated in our policy.

Chairman Brown recognized Cheryl Robison of 1387 Smith Road, Ochlocknee, Georgia and spoke on behalf of other residents on Smith Road who oppose the tower. Ms. Robison stated radiation exposure, agricultural and environmental reasons for the opposition.

In rebuttal, Mr. Rotenstreich presented information from the American Cancer Society that distinguishes between nonionizing and ionizing radiation.

Chairman Brown closed the Public Meeting at 6:11 p.m.

Chairman Brown recognized Commissioner Baggett who made a motion to approve Application 20-4-1. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Grady. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman Brown and Commissioners Baggett, Grady, Gross, Hickey, Rich, and Vonier voting aye.

Chairman Brown declared a Public Hearing in regards to Application 20-4-2, applicant Apache Holdings, LLC, William Blackburn, Managing Member for a land use reclassification on property located on Constitution Avenue Map 46F, Parcel 83. The request is to change the classification from CG (Commercial General to RM-11 (Residential, Multiple Family) to allow for the development of an apartment complex consisting of approximately 200 units.

Chairman Brown recognized County Manager Stephenson who presented the Staff Summary of the Planning & Land Use Process and explained the need for this process when values and principles conflict. The staff evaluated Application 20-4-2 and determined that it did not meet 5 of the 9 zoning criteria. He then went over the Public Hearing process.

Chairman Brown recognized Planning Director Ken Gay and Zoning Administrator Donna Holbert. Ms. Holbert presented Application 20-4-2, and stated that the application is not recommended for approval because it doesn't match the County's Comprehensive Plan nor the Future Land Use Map.

Chairman Brown recognized Bill Blackburn of 809 South Broad Street, Thomasville, Georgia and managing member of the Apache Holdings, LLC. Mr. Blackburn began by addressing concerns that he has already heard about the proposed project. He assures a minimum of a 60 ft. undisturbed buffer and a 6 ft. fence with slats that will totally enclose the complex. He then introduced contractor, Charlie Hand, of 1908 Lake Arthur Drive, Cairo, Georgia to address questions from the Board. The utilities are already at the site and water and sewer are available from the City of Thomasville. The proposed project is 143 ft. from the property line. Of the total 19 acres, the building community would be on 9 or 10 acres. Mr. Hand then presented a 3-picture schematic of the high-end apartment complex and an animated, drone-like clip, showcasing its resort-like features.

Chairman Brown recognized Larry Evans of 214 Huntington Point Drive, Thomasville, Georgia and President of the Huntington Pointe Homeowners Association, Inc. who expressed concerns of the proposed project and would like conditions addressed. They include maximum buffering, security, safety of intersections and the environmental impact of Lake Lilliquin. Mr. Evans also read a descriptive letter from a current resident that addresses additional concerns that come with apartment living: greater traffic on Constitution Avenue, dense population, noise variances, and lighting. The objection is not the reclassification of zoning from CG to R-11. In fact, they would rather have R-11 than Commercial General fearing that a shopping center could be built there with the current classification.

In rebuttal, Mr. Hand stated that they would be happy to work with the expressed conditions. A retention pond already exists and was approved by county and state requirements. He reiterated the following: they could double the buffer; the complex would be fully gated and secure; the complex would be "high-end"—no low income or subsidized housing, with monthly leases from \$900 - \$1150; and they would comply with whatever the school board would like to do for school bus pickup.

Commissioner Hickey asked questions regarding storm water and run-off. Mr. Richard Powell was introduced as the engineer who originally built the retention pond for the entire project and answered questions from the Board. The retention pond is located on the south east side of the property and the storm water will feed into that.

With no additional questions from the Board, Chairman Brown closed the Public Meeting at 6:39 p.m.

Chairman Brown recognized Commissioner Grady who made a motion to table Application 20-4-2 until the regular Board of Commissioners Meeting on July 28, 2020. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Baggett. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman Brown and Commissioners Baggett, Grady, Gross, Hickey, Rich, and Vonier voting aye.

The upcoming committee meetings were announced. The Personnel Committee will meet at the Historic Courthouse on June 24, 2020 at 8:30 a.m. The Public Property Committee will meet at the Historic Courthouse on July 2, 2020 at 8:30 a.m., and the Purchasing Committee will meet at the Historic Courthouse on July 7, 2020 at 8:30 a.m.

Chairman Brown recognized Commissioner Rich who made a motion to go into Executive Session. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hickey. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman Brown and Commissioners Baggett, Grady, Gross, Hickey, Rich, and Vonier voting aye. (7:10 p.m.)

Commissioners returned to the regular Board Meeting at 7:22 p.m. No action was taken.

Chairman Brown recognized Commissioner Hickey who made a motion to authorize the County Attorney to prepare documentation and the Chairman of the Board to sign said documents approving the Dollar General request for easement abandonment. Commissioner Grady seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman Brown and Commissioner Baggett, Grady, Gross, Hickey, Rich, and Vonier voting aye.

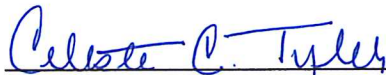
Chairman Brown recognized Commissioner Grady who made a motion to authorize the County Attorney to prepare documentation and the Chairman of the Board to sign said documents approving the deed transfer to the City of Thomasville. The property is Jackson Street right-of-way at State Route 35/US Route 319 (West Thomasville Bypass) and extending northeasterly along State Route 35 Business/US Route 319 Business to its junction with East Pinetree Boulevard (Approximately 4.35 miles). Commissioner Baggett seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman Brown and Commissioners Baggett, Grady, Gross, Hickey, Rich, and Vonier voting aye.

Chairman Brown thanked everyone for working together to keep the Farmers Market open.

Chairman Brown recognized Commissioner Baggett who made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Vonier. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman Brown and Commissioners Baggett, Grady Gross, Hickey, Rich, and Vonier voting aye. The meeting adjourned at 7:39 p.m.


Phillip V. Brown, Chairman

ATTEST:


Celeste C. Tyler, County Clerk